

# ARMY WELL-BEING

*Serving: Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Civilians, Retirees, Veterans, and Families*

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Spring 2003

## Army Well-Being becomes transformation centerpiece

By Lt. Gen. John M. Le Moyne  
Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1

Welcome to the first edition of the *Army Well-Being* newsletter. Our Army is transforming – and it is happening at a pace you never would have believed possible just four years ago. This transformation is much more than adopting new weapon systems, modernizing vehicles and improving equipment.

The centerpiece of this transformation is focused on the heart and soul of our organization ... its people, and how we develop leaders, foster self-reliance, and meet their personal needs and aspirations. In short ... how we take care of our people.

A critical pillar of our Personnel Transformation initiative is Well-Being. Well-Being transforms the human dimension of Army life for soldiers (active, Guard, and reserve), retirees, veterans, civilians, and families. The Well-Being process provides significantly improved capabilities to enhance the overall well-being of the Army family – it is the right thing to do, and we are cutting through the bureaucracy to get it done!

We are excited about the pace of change and positive results we



are already seeing. This transformed *Army Well-Being* newsletter is the logical result of these changes – a way to improve on the Family Liaison Office newsletter by expanding to cover all Well-Being programs and the entire Army family.

Army readiness is inextricably linked to the well-being of its people. We know from experience that solid Well-Being programs allow soldiers to focus on mis-

sions, training, and operational readiness because they are confident we are taking care of their families.

We also recognize that this system must address the needs of all who help the Army accomplish missions: our loyal retirees, our heroic veterans, our dedicated civilians, and our proud soldiers and their families.

Well-Being expands the concept of quality of life. It provides

an opportunity for service and personal development, a competitive standard of living with benefits, a sense of belonging and support, and an environment of personal enrichment and growth. It includes reliable feedback mechanisms to evaluate the effect and value that programs have on Army people.

The Army Well-Being program helps the commander understand when the delicate balance between what is expected of our Army Team starts exceeding the actual or perceived commitment to that Army Team.

In this quarterly newsletter, *Army Well-Being*, we will communicate the Army's Well-Being message to its people ... all of you. Updates will focus on the Well-Being areas of the Army ethos, pay and compensation, healthcare, housing and workplace environment, education, family programs, and cohesion. We hope this newsletter will be a valuable tool for you ... ensuring that you have updated information and providing you a place to turn when those tough questions arise. People are the most valuable resource of our great Army – and this program helps us thank you every day for your continued service.

We are ... An Army of One!

## Military Spouse Day '03

Begin making plans now to recognize the efforts of military spouses this year on Military Spouse Day – May 9.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan set aside a day to recognize the significant contributions and sacrifices made to the armed forces by military spouses.

As volunteers, military spouses have provided invaluable service and leadership in educational, community, recreational, religious, social and cultural endeavors.

In 1985, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger established Military Spouse Day as the Friday before Mother's Day each year.



# To SERVE



## Latest Stop-Loss freezes soldiers in deploying units

By Joe Burlas  
Army News Service

In an effort to sustain the readiness of the force, the Army is implementing a unit stop-loss for the active force, which mirrors the Reserve-Component stop-loss measure designed to keep deploying units manned with soldiers who have trained and worked together as a team.

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Reginald J. Brown approved this latest of eight stop-loss measures Feb. 14. The initiative is targeted for selected units that have already deployed or have been alerted for deployment into the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

"This new policy supports the stability and strengthens unit cohesiveness and teamwork of deploying AC forces and will bolster the trust and confidence of our soldiers as they prepare to deploy," said Lt. Gen. John M. Le Moyne, G-1.

The Army is also extending Korea tours by 90 days as a means to keep the force there fully manned.

With the exception of the RC stop-loss announcement, previous measures targeted soldiers with specific skills in which Army faced a potential shortage. The skill-based stop loss has kept soldiers from voluntarily separating from the Army for a year.

The new AC unit stop-loss policy is currently open-ended, an official said, and is expected to be lifted when the Combatant Commands recommend the Army lift it

based on stability of the operational environment.

The AC Unit Stop-Loss impacts soldiers when their unit is alerted for deployment into the CENTCOM AOR unless one of the following conditions apply:

- The soldier is within 14 days of an approved separation date and from the effective date of AC unit stop loss.
- The soldier is already on terminal leave with an approved separation date.
- The soldier has already shipped household goods in preparation for transition from service.
- The soldier is already impacted by an earlier stop-loss measure, in which case the earlier 12-month measure will be used to determine when the soldier can volunteer for separation.

The U.S. Total Army Personnel

Command remains the Stop-Loss exception-to-policy authority for soldiers with compassionate reasons to separate, officials said.

Stop-Loss does not prohibit commanders moving forward on involuntary separations, they said.

Stop Move, the suspension of permanent change of station moves, was also announced in December for AC units already deployed, or alerted for deployment. Because this policy will keep many soldiers from moving from their current unit to an assignment in Korea, the Army is extending the tours of soldiers currently assigned in Korea by 90 days. A measure that officials said has been approved by the Department of Defense. Affected soldiers in Korea have been notified of their extension by the chain of command.

"When we were working stop-move, we saw there was going to be a delta between what Korea needs in the way of manning and what the measure was going to do to soldiers on orders for Korea," said Col. Bob Ortiz, chief of Enlisted Distribution and Readiness for the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1.

"Involuntary foreign-service tour extensions for Korea make up the difference between the number of soldiers no longer available to PCS to Korea under stop-move and what Korea needs to maintain personnel readiness," he said.

According to MILPER message 03-93 the extensions can be up to 180 days, but Ortiz said that review of current needs in Korea revised that figure to just 90 days.

**Editor's note:** Staff Sgt. Marcia Triggs contributed to this article.

## Soldiers earn promotion points taking ACS courses

Soldiers can earn promotion points by completing selected Army Community Service courses in a new Army initiative to foster leader development.

At Army installations, ACS programs fall under the directorate of community and family activities.

ACS includes programs such as Family Advocacy, Financial Readiness, Army Family Team Building, Family Readiness Groups, Relocation, and Spouse Employment Readiness. These activities and services are designed to develop and maintain individual and family readiness.

Soldiers can receive a total of four promotion points for accumulating 40 hours of course instruction in four ACS programs: New Parent Support Program; Financial Readiness Training; Operation READY classes and Army Family Team Building (Level 1).

The installation ACS director, or the director of community and family activities must sign Depart-

ment of the Army Form 87 certifying course completion for the promotion points to be valid. The U.S. Total Army Personnel Command approved the concept and process last summer.

Soldiers will not receive promotion points for mandatory classes such as financial readiness training for "first termers" or parent support program classes taken as a result of a recommended Family Advocacy Case Review Committee treatment plan.

"Promotion Points are an added bonus. Not only do soldiers get the benefit of receiving excellent classroom training, they also enhance their careers," said Brenda McDaniel, who manages this program in the Family Programs Directorate of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center in Alexandria, Va.

Information about these, and other, courses is available on the ACS Web site at [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org).

— CFSC Public Affairs Office.

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# To Live



## Deployment Well-Being

### Pet fostering programs offers deploying troops new option

By Harry Noyes  
Army News Service

SAN ANTONIO, Texas – For the soldier, scurrying to wrap up a thousand details before deploying, pet abandonment is a decision born of desperation and fraught with guilt.

For a frightened, bewildered animal, suddenly ripped from a secure and comfortable home and thrust into a terrifying world of shelters – or worse, life as a stray on the streets – it almost always means an early death.

Moved by a love of animals and gratitude to their country's defenders, a growing number of Americans are offering an alternative scenario, pet fostering.

These stay-at-home patriots open their homes to the dogs and cats – and sometimes the rats, parrots, iguanas, boa constrictors and tarantulas – of departing soldiers who have no one else to care for their animals.

The trick is getting soldiers and foster-caregivers together and making sure that the parties (human and animal) are a good fit for each other, says Maj. Steven D. Osborn of U.S. Army Veterinary Command.

Osborn recommends beginning the search

locally. Soldiers can check with installation veterinary treatment facilities, which may be familiar with local services. If a VTF does not know about fostering service, the soldier should not give up.

Check next with local humane societies, animal-control facilities and breed clubs. If that does not work, then cast a wider net regionally or even nationally.

Of course, a more distant foster home involves costs for transportation of the animal, but it's a small price for owners who love their pets.

Several Web sites provide general advice on fostering, or with brokering services to bring pet owners and foster-caregivers together.

These sites do not assume responsibility for the pets. Even if a site matches up pet owners and pets with potential fosterers, the pet owner is responsible for the final decision to work with a particular caregiver.

It is also the pet owners' responsibility to communicate fully and openly with foster-caregivers, to ensure both sides are comfortable and confident with arrangements, to settle all questions about expenses beforehand, and to draw up a contract outlining such details.

Among the relevant Web sites are these:

NetPets — [www.netpets.org](http://www.netpets.org) (click on "military pets foster project" link at top of home page), a non-profit service that says it has recruited and screened 5,000 foster-caregivers. Caregivers must provide references and contact information about their veterinarians. Founder Steve Albin phones the veterinarian before accepting a would-be fosterer. There is no charge to soldiers, who can fill in an on-line form describing their pets. Albin will then match each pet with one or more suitable foster homes. There are also links for signing up as a foster-caregiver and for donations to support the site.

Feline Rescue — [www.felinerescue.net](http://www.felinerescue.net) (click on "Operation Noble Foster" box), a non-profit group, which says it has received many fostering offers. This site has a database allowing pet owners to do their own searches for suitable fosterers. Feline Rescue does not screen fosterers itself, but collects screening information for pet owners to scrutinize. In turn it asks owners to provide a "cat resume" to help the fosterer determine whether a particular cat is suitable for his or her home. The site also offers a sample contract form.

Humane Society of the U.S. — [www.hsus.org/ace/11822](http://www.hsus.org/ace/11822), which does not offer foster-brokering services, but has much information to assist military pet owners, including a checklist and a sample contract form. HSUS works with other animal-protection organizations to encourage local shelters to develop fostering programs.

4MilitaryFamilies — [www.4militaryfamilies.com/pets.htm](http://www.4militaryfamilies.com/pets.htm) provides information and tips for taking care of military pets during foster care or moves.

**Editor's note:** Noyes is assistant editor of *The Mercury*, the U.S. Army Medical Command newspaper.

### Academy Life Insurance policyholders may be eligible for payments

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Information Service

The Academy Life Insurance Company seeks immediate contact with about 110,000 current and former servicemembers who may be eligible for payments from a fund established as part of a settlement it reached with the Justice Department Dec. 19.

Col. Steve Strong, director of legal policy in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, said the insurance company will mail notices and payment applications to the last address it has for thousands of policyholders it believes eligible. Notices were to be mailed by Feb. 24, he said.

Those eligible have until June 24 to file for payments of up to \$200 per policy, as part of a \$160 million settlement reached after the Justice Department filed a civil complaint against Academy Life for defrauding servicemembers.

As part of the settlement the company

will pay more than \$2.7 million to persons who purchased their policies from 1991 to 1998.

Strong said former policyholders must meet all the following conditions to be eligible for payment from the settlement fund:

The person was the last owner of a Genesis Series policy issued from Jan. 1, 1991, through Dec. 31, 1998.

- The policy terminated prior to Sept. 30, 2002.
- No death benefit was paid under the policy.
- The person was living on Sept. 30, 2002.
- The person accurately completes an application for payment and mails it to Academy Life by June 24.

Academy Life verifies eligibility.

For more information on eligibility requirements or a notice and application, call Academy Life toll-free at 1-800-523-5625.



**National Volunteer Week**  
**April 27 — May 3**  
**"Celebrate Volunteers —**  
**The Spirit of America!"**





# To CONNECT



## Employees should register with Army's Civilian Emergency Contact Database

In light of the heightened security threat, Department of the Army civilian employees are strongly encouraged to ensure that their emergency contact information is current and accurate.

As part of the Army's contingency planning process, it is suggested that the following types of information be provided for each contact person: home and work telephone numbers, cell phone or pager numbers (if any) and home e-mail address.

It is also highly recommended that employees update organizational emergency contact information on a regular basis.

The need for accurate emergency contact information was underscored following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon. Up-to-date information greatly aided Army officials in the personnel accounting process immediately following the attack, tracking individuals whose offices were displaced and conveying critical information rapidly despite widespread computer system impacts.

To accomplish this task, the Army has established an automated civilian personnel emergency contact database as part of the lessons learned. The database includes Appropriated Fund and Non-Appropriated Fund employees.

This is a voluntary program, which requires the use of employees' social security numbers.

While participation is not mandatory, Army officials say that it is strongly encouraged, so that emergency data is readily available in the event of an emergency or the death of an employee. The emergency data stored in the database will only be available to authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying emergency contact (s) and processing or assisting with the necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

A link to the Army's Civilian Emergency Contact Database, including instructions for registration and entry of data, can be found on the Civilian Personnel Online Web site at [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil) under Emergency Contact Data.



Pfc. Michael J. Carden, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division PAO

### *Warm welcome*

Kyler Covert welcomes her father, Capt. A.J. Covert, with a big hug at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., as he and the final paratroopers from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Aviation Brigade recently returned from their tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The Army Family Liaison Office Web site — [www.aflo.org/data/modules/pbm/rendered/well\\_being\\_deployment.asp](http://www.aflo.org/data/modules/pbm/rendered/well_being_deployment.asp) — provides Army families with a variety of deployment-related information.

## PERSCOM updating soldiers' DIEMS database

The U.S. Total Army Personnel Command is conducting an Armywide audit to validate the Date Initially Entered Military Service for active-duty soldiers.

The highest priority for this review is soldiers who are nearing retirement. DIEMS is the date an individual was initially enlisted, inducted or appropriated in a regular or reserve component.

This date is solely used to indicate which retirement plan a soldier is under. DIEMS and retirement plans can be found on soldiers' end-of-month Leave and Earnings Statements.

All soldiers planning to retire, or those with a Basic Active Service Date of Jan. 1, 1979 through Dec. 31, 1982 should view their DIEMS on the PERSCOM Web site to indicate whether their DIEMS is correct or incorrect.

The link for an incorrect date allows soldiers to send an e-mail to PERSCOM or the Enlisted Records and Evaluations Center to

acknowledge a need for further review. It may be necessary for the soldier to send documents that are missing from their Official Military Personnel File.

Due to the number of files that require validation, soldiers are asked to validate DIEMS according to the following schedule: BASD Jan. 1, 1979 through Dec. 31, 1982 validate through April 1; BASD Jan. 1, 1983 through Dec. 31, 1986 validate from April 2 through June 1; BASD Jan. 1, 1987 through Dec. 31, 1989 validate from June 2 through Aug. 1.

Soldiers can view their OMPF online at [www.perscom.army.mil](http://www.perscom.army.mil), or through Army Knowledge Online at [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil).

For more information, enlisted soldiers should contact Sylvia Davis, chief of Records Services Division at (317) 510-3682 or DSN 699-3682; officers should contact Theresa McGuire, chief of Officer Records Branch at (703) 325-4544 or DSN 221-4544.



# To GROW



## Financial Readiness key to Army family self-reliance

Even when a soldier deploys or mobilizes, the bills and financial obligations don't stop.

Army Community Service's Financial Readiness Program is designed to help soldiers and their families become self-reliant in the face of frequent deployments and separations.

The Financial Readiness Program provides education and counseling about personal financial affairs such as managing money, long range financial planning, and consumer issues. The goal is to help families be financially sound, self-sufficient, reduce debts and reduce demands for emergency financial assistance.

Money management classes teach the basics of banking, checkbook management, budget planning, credit, debt management and liquidation, saving and investing, consumer laws and rights, business scams, and preparing for permanent moves or deployments.

Another ACS resource for deploying fami-

lies is "Operation READY" or Operation Resources for Educating About Deployment and You. Special workbooks address financial readiness for Army families to prepare them for deployment-related issues.

It is important for spouses to realize that soldiers are still going to need spending money for incidentals while away. Therefore the family has to establish a budget. Financial Readiness Program counselors work with them to develop this budget.

Family members are asked to bring in their monthly bills and expenditures – even information on how much is set aside into savings as an emergency fund. By doing this, families will have an idea of what they're spending, and how much they need to maintain the family while the soldier is deployed.

Additionally, there are financial checklists and soldier and spouse checklists for personal

affairs readiness. These checklists cover issues such as spousal access to financial documents and the signature authority to make deposits and withdrawals in all accounts.

These checklists and worksheets are available on the ACS Web site at [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org).

A thorough understanding of their financial situation is particularly critical for National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers, many of whom face reduced income when they're mobilized, officials said.

Reserve component units also have the OP READY financial readiness materials available to them.

Financial readiness is not just a concern for the married soldier, it is also important for single soldiers, many of whom have automobiles, credit cards, children support payments or other financial obligations.

– CFSC Public Affairs

## Summit explores partnerships, enhances career opportunities

By Victoria Palmer  
CFSC Public Affairs

Army spouses told corporate executives like it is – that supporting their partners' military career often means sacrificing their own – recently during a summit to address issues concerning Army spouse employment.

"In helping my husband become successful, I feel at times that I have to give up my dream," said Amy Rossi. "When you frequently move, it's difficult to find employers you'd like to work for, especially when in a new area without a network of support such as friends and family."

Rossi, the Employment Readiness Program manager at Fort Drum, N.Y., was one of four spouses who shared personal stories about their careers during the Army Spouse Employment Summit in Arlington, Va., recently.

Representatives from 16 corporations were among those who attended the summit, a follow on to the Chief of Staff of the Army's "Investment in America" meeting at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point last June.

The Army, Department of De-

fense and Congress place great importance on increasing military spouse employment as a national objective to improve the retention of soldiers personnel, summit officials said. The 2002 National Defense Authorization Act directed DoD to examine existing spouse employment programs to help improve retention of soldier by increasing the employability of spouses.

"We are attempting to develop partnerships with Fortune 500 companies in close proximity to military installations, to increase career opportunities and provide career continuity for our spouses," said Delores Johnson, CFSC's Family Programs director.

"I'm hoping we can form a partnership between businesses and the spouses that will work for both," Rossi said. "You are going to have a ready work force, and we may have career opportunities."

Attendees defined elements of an ideal partnership and identified critical issues during the summit.

"It was a combination of brainstorming and action planning," Johnson said. "There was just so much energy, trying to figure out

how to expand opportunities, develop skill banks, trying to sort what the next steps will be."

Army spouses offer unique benefits as potential employees, such as existing portable health-care coverage and an identifiable pool of educated, experienced and adaptable workers. These qualities offset human resources challenges often faced by corporate America.

"What we've done is outline a methodology or strategy," said retired Maj. Gen. Frank L. Miller, Jr., vice president of Government Operations and Services for Dell Computer Corporation.

"It's more than just good business," Miller continued. "All corporations have to be socially responsible. I think part of social responsibility is where you have the opportunity to make a capital investment in our customers. That is what this is all about – ensuring we are making a capital investment to a singularly special group of people that protect our nation."

Many soldiers make retention decisions based on their families' financial stability.

About 55 percent of Army spouses who are in the work force contribute between 20 to 40 per-



Victoria Palmer  
Amy Rossi, an Army spouse and Employment Readiness Programs manager from Fort Drum, N.Y., describes her personal career challenges to attendees at the recent Army Spouse Employment Summit in Arlington, Va.

cent of their family's income. For more information on the Employment Readiness, visit [www.armymwr.com](http://www.armymwr.com).



# CONSTITUENT ROUNDUP

## Active Duty

Since before the nation's birth, American soldiers have instilled hope in a noble dream of liberty. The Army has remained on point for the Nation through nine wars, and the intervals of peace in the years between – defending the Constitution and preserving freedom.

The readiness of our total Army is inextricably linked to the well being of our people. Well-Being responds to the physical, material, mental, and spiritual needs of all Army people – soldiers, civilians, retirees, veterans, and their families. We recruit soldiers, but we retain families – Well-Being programs help make the Army a good place to raise a family.

Currently 220,000 soldiers are deployed, and more than 124,000 of our reserve component have been mobilized as we afford the Commander in Chief the flexibility to conduct the Global War on Terrorism.

We recall President Abraham Lincoln's intimate words about soldiers during another crucial point in our nation's history, "This extraordinary war in which we are engaged falls heavily upon all classes of people, but the most heavily upon the soldier. For it has been said, 'all that a man hath will he give for his life,' and, while all contribute of their substance, the soldier puts his life at stake, and often yields it up in his country's cause. The highest merit, then, is due to the soldier!"

– *Office of the Chief of Public Affairs*

## National Guard

Today National Guard soldiers are faced with activations, now more than ever, in defense of America's freedoms. Soldiers make sacrifices in leaving their civilian employment, sometimes with a decline in their standard of living due to pay disparities. Some soldiers not only have to worry about a shift in their standards of living, but occasionally, soldiers may come back to no job, lower pay, or reduced hours.

All of these factors threaten the well-being of soldiers and families. Some soldiers have even lost their homes over these extended deployments. On the other hand, some soldiers receive an increase in pay during activation that can enhance their well-being.

National Guard soldiers and families are geographically dispersed, and the majority have no access to active-duty installations. However, there is an extensive National Guard family assistance network in place for every state and territory.

– *Army National Guard*

## Army Reserve

The Army Reserve has always played a vital role in the Army, providing key resources to power the active force. The past decade, however, has seen reserves become a cornerstone of Total Army success. Citizen-soldiers from units and hometowns across the country have been called on to enable the Army to complete its missions. This increased operational tempo has resulted in a proportionally increased need for a myriad of Well-Being services among Army Reserve soldiers and their families.

The Army's Well-Being Liaison Office is chartered to focus attention on the needs of all sectors of the Army community. Army Reserve providers and consumers of Well-Being constituent services can assist by critically evaluating the effectiveness of these programs and offering suggestions to improve their ability to meet the evolving needs of the Army Reserve community.

– *Office of the Chief, Army Reserve*

## Civilian Employees

Civilian Thrift Savings Plan participants, over age 50, can soon make additional contributions of up to \$2,000 above the current contribution rates. The limits on catch-up amounts are expected to rise by \$1,000 each year until 2006 when they will cap at \$5,000.

These "catch-up" contributions potentially provide participants an opportunity to make up for working years when 401k's, and similar savings plans like the TSP, were not available.

The Thrift Investment Board has not yet officially provided specific details about TSP catch-up contributions. As information concerning these changes becomes available, it will be provided in TSP bulletins on the TSP Web site at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

– *Office of Personnel Management*

## Retirees

Army leaders will address the concerns of nearly 900,000 retirees and surviving spouses in April, when the Army Chief of Staff's Retiree Council conducts its annual meeting.

The council, currently co-chaired by Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John A. Dubia and Sgt. Maj. of the Army (Ret.) Robert E. Hall, is made up of 14 Army retirees – seven officers and seven enlisted.

At its annual meeting, the Council reviews issues forwarded by installation councils, and determines which should be reported to the CSA and which can be addressed at the installation level.

The Council is reviewing 63 issues forwarded by installation councils at this year's

meeting – April 7 through 11. One third of these issues deal with healthcare.

At the close of the meeting, the co-chairmen present the Council's concerns to the chief of staff, and will continue to meet with the chief throughout the year to monitor the progress.

– *Army Retirement Services*

## Veterans

In February the President's Office of Management and Budget released a "scorecard" showing the Department of Veterans Affairs is on track to meeting all five initiatives in the President's Management Agenda.

OMB gave VA "green lights," indicating successful progress towards implementation in all five categories of the President's agenda – strategic management of human capital, competitive sourcing, improving financial performance, expanding electronic government and budget performance integration. The scorecard rated VA's performance through Dec. 31.

The PMA is a strategy for improving the management performance of the government. The scorecard rates each agency's progress in performance of goals set jointly by the agency and OMB. Green is the highest rating OMB awards.

– *Department of Veterans Affairs*

## Army Families

One of the greatest issues concerning the Well-Being of Army families, as soldiers are deployed around the world to support Army's role in the Global War on Terrorism, is providing for safe and secure communication between soldiers and their families at home.

A number of private organizations are currently sponsoring Web sites that say their mission is to promote the sharing of information between soldiers and families. But just how secure are these sites? Many ask family members to provide them with personal information about the soldier, such as a unit and the soldier's social security number. This information can be used to steal one's identity and even by terrorists trying to plan attacks against U.S. forces.

Army Knowledge Online – [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil) – is a good solution, as it provides for a means of secure communication. According to AKO officials, "AKO allows family members the ability to rapidly access general-level knowledge about the Army and their soldiers across a secure communication channel."

Every soldier's family member is eligible for an AKO account and e-mail address.

– *Army Family Liaison Office*